



AN INTRODUCTION
TO ALCHEMICAL
PHILOSOPHY



by

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An Introduction to Alchemical Philosophy
by Alasdair Forsythe

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Preface

The Book of Aquarius, Third Edition is meant as a companion to Alchemy Deciphered, which is available for free from my website:

www.alchemy.ws

Rather than include numerous quotes from the alchemists throughout this book, I will instead reference the relevant premises in Alchemy Deciphered, in which you can then look up the premise and read the hundreds of supporting quotations. There are simply too many relevant quotes to include them in this book, and I hope to encourage the reader to read both books, as they are the perfect mutual companions for one another. For a better understanding of this book I recommend you read it in conjunction with Alchemy Deciphered; reading all of the quotes from each premise referenced at the beginning of each chapter in this book. Alchemy can never be fully understood by reading only one book.

1. Alchemical Philosophy

The philosophy of alchemy is not limited to the understanding of alchemy alone. If it were then it must surely be untrue, as there can be no truth that does not apply in every circumstance and in every situation. To be called a truth it must be true everywhere and at all times. Alchemical philosophy is fundamental, it applies in every instance of every circumstance of everything, throughout the universe.

Alchemical philosophy should not strictly be referred to as anything other than just 'philosophy.' It is the same philosophy that governs everything: from the movement of the stars, to the birth of a child, to the development of a planet. Alchemical philosophy is not an aspect of alchemy; it is an aspect of the universe.

Alchemy itself could be said to be no more than the natural effect of philosophy. It is an inevitable result of the philosophy which governs our universe, and so the existence of alchemy can be predicted by anyone who comes to a good understanding of philosophy. Naturally, this is how alchemy came about: a philosopher strived to understand the nature of reality, and from his understanding of philosophy he knew how to guide Nature to create a physical manifestation of its principles, the process for which we now call 'alchemy.'

No one can be called an alchemist, and no one will have any chance of making the Philosophers' Stone, unless one understands what they are doing and why they are doing it by reflecting on the fundamental philosophical principles on which alchemy is based. Hence the purpose of this book.

2. What is Alchemy?

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

- 13. Alchemy is a physical science
- 35. Imitate nature
- 36. Use nature to interpret alchemy
- 37. Alchemy is an acceleration of nature
- 38. Don't begin until you understand nature
- 39. Don't experiment wildly, follow only the straight path of nature
- 40. Nature completes the operations, not manually
- 41. The Stone is a microcosm
- 58. Alchemy is analogous to generation in plants, animals & minerals
- 75. It's all about heat

You should already be familiar with these points and the rest of Alchemy Deciphered before beginning to read this book.

To discuss Alchemy is to discuss Nature. The capitalization of 'Nature' is used to differentiate between nature as a phenomena and Nature as a proactive force, although it could also be called passive, though that does not imply that Nature is conscious but it does imply that Nature has an observable method and an ultimate goal. This personification is taken more to heart by some than others; for some it can become a God-like status, but for others it is only a useful heuristic to help us in our understanding.

Alchemy, called both an art and a science by its practitioners, who are also its philosophers and its artists, aims to perform a service under the authority of Nature. I am not trying to be cryptic here, I mean to say that Alchemy provides only a small direction of persuasion and otherwise does nothing but follow the laws of Nature. For example, a gardener does not make trees and flowers, neither does he make seeds; Nature does all of these things. What the gardener does do is control where the seeds are planted, help the desirable plants obtain nourishment, and remove weeds from the system. This is a perfect analogy for Alchemy, with no stretch of the imagination, as an alchemist is exactly like a gardener in this regard.

The gardener does not imagine that he has any power to make a tree, but he certainly knows that if he can find the right seed, plant it in a suitable location, then care for the tree to ensure it receives maximal nourishment suitable to it that tree will grow to be healthy and strong. Alchemy is the same.

Like a gardener, an alchemist must be familiar with the natural processes under which he operates. Unlike a gardener, an alchemist utilizes a greater degree of control over his environment. Where a gardener has a garden, an alchemist has a chemistry set, representing a microcosm of the greater world around us. 'Microcosm' means little world, it is a miniature version of something greater; as are all things. The size, shape, temperature gradient and pressure of this microcosm, or little world, are controlled by the alchemist for Nature to operate effectively and naturally.

Nature operates according to rather basic rules. For example, gases expand as they are heated, which causes cooler air to sink below the hot air due to the greater density of the cold air (cold air is heavier than hot air.) This effect causes hot air to rise and cold air to sink. While straightforward in itself this is the primary cause of all weather on Earth, including wind and the rain cycle. Without the rain cycle there would be no plants, and without plants there would be no animals. Without wind, water vapor would descend on exactly the same spot from where it evaporated, and so all of the water on Earth would quickly end up in the sea or in deep lakes, making life anywhere else impossible. To put it simply: there would be no life on Earth, at least not in any form we would recognize, if gases did not expand when heated. These cycles and currents which empower all life are all created from the very simple effect of air being heated and then naturally cooling down; it is complexity born out of simplicity.

The important point to recognize is that this whole cycle of weather, convection currents, rain cycle, etc. which are necessary for the development of complex life forms, are caused only by an influx of heat at a specific point in the system. All of the details then occur naturally, due to natural laws as dictated by Nature. This is what the alchemists mean when they say that Nature completes the operations and they are not performed manually by the alchemist.

So here you can see why the alchemists regard Alchemy as an art, as well as a science and a philosophy. The art is in the beauty of a naturally

occurring system that has been generated with only a slight persuasive push from the alchemist. A lava lamp would be an analogy that you may be more familiar with: beauty of naturally occurring cycles generated from the input of heat.

Alchemy is called a philosophy and an imitation of Nature because an alchemist must ponder the world around him to understand how and why Nature acts the way it does so that he can imitate this in his little world, or microcosm.

The microcosm has similar features to its macrocosm, the Earth, but operates wholly inside of a laboratory flask. Part of the beauty of this is in its simplicity: an entire ecosystem is naturally created by only the influx of heat at the bottom of the flask.

As humans, we are part of Nature just as much as everything else, and we operate on the same principles as everything else. The innate feeling of attraction to any particular thing, for reasons of innocent appreciation, we call *beauty*.

This is why alchemy is rightly called an Art, as art is itself, by very definition, an expression, or symbol, of a truth which cannot be sufficiently expressed in plain language. Art is therefore an imitation of the workings of Nature. All beings are naturally drawn towards truth, and thereby Nature, as the truth of this universe is found in the workings of Nature; those same workings of Nature from which we were created and daily live. Thus, each of us is innately drawn towards any example, or symbol, of Nature operating on its most fundamental level, it being closer to the truth that we seek. Upon feeling this innate attraction towards truth, we label the object 'beautiful'. Yet beauty truly is in the eye of the beholder since each of us is only capable of appreciating a truth that we are capable of understanding; in the realization of the truth behind the symbol we experience the feeling that we are looking at something beautiful.

This 'principle of beauty' helps one to determine whether a path is likely or not to be close to the truth. An explanation which appears to more beautiful, or more poetic, is likely to be closer to the truth than an alternative explanation which is crude and unsatisfying. Truth is nature; nature is beautiful; alchemy is an art founded wholly on nature; art is a symbolic expression of something that means something and it means

something because it touches on a truth. The truth is poetic and the truth is beautiful.

Alchemy is also called an acceleration of Nature because with Nature and the alchemist working in tandem over a specifically designed microcosm, the desired result can be achieved in a much shorter time than it can without the alchemist. The alchemist operates as the servant of Nature: protecting the system from outside influence, diligently upkeeping the temperature, and removing superfluities in the same way that a gardener removes weeds; while Nature does all of the actual development. Or you could just say that the natural processes happen entirely of their own accord.

This then is the job of the alchemist: gardening in the laboratory so that Nature can operate effectively and without being disturbed.

In theory then, alchemy can be used for the accelerated natural development of anything, since an alchemist is a servant who works to help Nature do what Nature naturally does, but more effectively and in an accelerated manner. However, this is where things get interesting: as you learned in *Alchemy Deciphered*, premise 14, alchemists are wholly concerned with using their understanding of natural philosophy to generate a single substance with some rather unbelievable properties.

3. What is the Philosophers' Stone?

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

- 14. Alchemy is about making the Philosophers' Stone
- 48. Everything is made from one thing: quintessence
- 49. Quintessence nourishes all things
- 50. Quintessence is impalpable

Quintessence is the one thing from which everything else is made. While this may sound esoteric, it is in this day and age not so far-fetched as one might initially think. A modern update on the word 'quintessence' puts this into perspective: *energy* is the one thing from which everything else is made. This also makes much clearer sense of the premises 48, 49 & 50:

- 48. Everything is made from one thing: *energy*
- 49. *Energy* nourishes all things
- 50. *Energy* is impalpable

Now it is much more easily digested! Quintessence is energy, that invisible and impalpable spirit from which all things are formed.

Energy comes in different forms, for example it can be formed into solid matter or it can be in the form of movement. It is agreed in modern science that matter and energy are interchangeable, even if we haven't quite managed to efficiently utilize this yet with current technology, still having to burn oil in order to extract usable energy for movement from the stored mass form of oil – which itself is called a 'fossil fuel' because it used to be vegetation, which is why oil is so concentrated in energy. Still, we eat food and that gives us the energy to move, which can only be considered a matter to energy conversion since we ate matter and used it for movement. Considering that worms and bacteria can do this, the concept of matter to energy conversion is hardly far-fetched, on the contrary we take it so much for granted that we fail to see it for what it truly is: plain, obvious and everywhere.

I use the terms 'determined energy' and 'undetermined energy' for the two main forms of energy that I am interested in. 'Determined energy' is

energy that has already become something, such as matter, and so it is already determined. 'Undetermined energy' is energy that is free in the sense that it is not determined into something, not matter, and is in a state that can be used.

As an example, a carrot is made of determined energy. Your car will not run on carrots and if you get a cut on your body you can't put a carrot on the cut and expect the carrot to transmute into skin to seal the wound, neither will holding a carrot make you run faster. A carrot is only a carrot, it is already determined, even though it is made out of energy – it is useless for anything else in its current form. But a carrot does contain energy and this energy can be extracted. To extract this energy we must break the carrot down and destroy its current form. By chewing the carrot and then digesting it the carrot is destroyed and so its energy is no longer determined, but freed. The determined energy of the carrot becomes undetermined energy and can then be used by our bodies for nourishment – which is to say that the determined energy of the carrot becomes undetermined and then becomes redetermined as human body matter or energy.

Following on from this, the philosophical definition of 'edible' would then be any matter that is easily broken down by our digestive system into undetermined energy, with the exceptions of substances that contain chemicals which are actively harmful to our bodies (i.e. poison.) Our bodies cannot digest rocks, metals or plastics simply because they are not easily broken down, which is why these are inedible. Being 'edible' is therefore a quality that is related to the ease of decomposition/digestion of the substance.

To recap: a carrot contains energy but this energy is already determined in the form of the carrot. To release this energy the carrot must be destroyed. Once the form of the carrot is destroyed its energy can now be used for other things, such as healing, growing our bodies or moving. Without the carrot first being destroyed it could not be used by our bodies for healing, hence why we need to chew and digest our food. Any matter easily destroyed and not poisonous is edible and therefore food. The reason we eat food is to extract energy from the substance. Therefore the true nourishment that we are looking for in food is not the food itself, but the energy contained within the food. So true nourishment is energy. Eating is a matter-to-energy conversion because we eat matter and from it we can run and jump around, grow our bodies, heal wounds, etc.

Of course this is a bit of a simplification because, as we know, the carrot is broken down mostly into building blocks, such as protein, carbohydrate, etc. and these components are used by our body in these forms, each with a specific use. But that is not the whole story.

So far I have said nothing controversial in this chapter, so here is where alchemical philosophy deviates from the opinion of accepted modern biology: according to alchemical philosophy these proteins and carbohydrates are not what we are really looking for in food, since they are still determined into matter. What we are really looking for is the undetermined energy itself.

Undetermined energy will adopt any form that is imposed upon it. You could say that undetermined energy is impressionable and wants to become something. So undetermined energy can be used by our bodies for anything: it will become protein if protein is needed, or it will become mineral if minerals are needed. Undetermined energy is the one thing from which everything else is made and therefore it follows that if you have undetermined energy you can make anything from it.

It should be noted that modern science does not have any problem with matter being broken down into energy and then reformed into matter, only whether this process naturally happens inside of our bodies or not. There are some scientific references though: C. L. Kervran in his book *Biological Transmutations* (Crosby Lockwood, 1972) reported to have discovered that chicken eggs sometimes contain more calcium than existed in the hen's diet.

To illustrate this a little better: consider that I offer you two options. The first option is a bowl of fresh fruit, and the second is a glass of water and dry concoction of manufactured protein, fat, carbohydrate, fiber, vitamins and mineral pills made to the same exact specification of the fruit. Which is healthier?

I think it's safe to say that we all understand that fresh fruit is healthier than a fistful of pills offering the same building blocks. Something is missing from the pills that is contained within the fruit. This fact is generally accepted by modern biology, which is of course a contradiction. Alchemical philosophy provides the answer to this puzzle: the missing ingredient is the undetermined energy.

The same applies to the process of cooking food, in addition to the chemical changes to the food caused by cooking, the process of cooking consumes the easily-accessible energy contained within the food and so there is less easily-accessible energy left over for our bodies to utilize when we consume the cooked food. Hence why uncooked food is healthier than cooked food (except that the process of cooking kills potentially harmful bacteria and parasites, which is why we began the tradition of cooking food in the first place.)

Another example of determined vs. undetermined energy is as follows. If you take a fresh carrot and plant a seed inside the carrot then this seed will not grow – not while the carrot is fresh. Have you considered why this is? It is because the matter of the carrot is already determined and unlike our bodies, the seed does not have a digestive system to break the carrot down into undetermined energy. However, once the carrot starts to decompose then the seed will begin to grow out the mush which was once a carrot but is no longer. In this sense the carrot is effectively transmuted into its new form, which might be a flower or a tree, which it could never have done if it had not died and decomposed first (a philosophical principle we will touch on later.) The carrot is quite literally transmuted into the flower; but for this it needs two things: (1) the form of the carrot needs to be destroyed, i.e. the carrot needs to decompose, and (2) it needs to be given a new form to become, i.e. a seed is planted in it. If the carrot is not decomposed, then no new form will grow in it, and if no new seed is planted then no new form will grow.

As you were left in the previous chapter, once alchemists have learned to work together with Nature to achieve a natural end, there is one single thing that they are interested in. It is something naturally occurring, which while impalpable can be collected and concentrated in a physical form. This is the only thing worth seeking because it is the one thing from which all other things are made.

The Philosophers' Stone is undetermined energy, concentrated. Given to anything it will provide enough energy for that thing to become whatever it is designed to be.

It is called the Philosophers' Stone because it can be made only by a philosopher, which is one who understands Nature. That is to say that an understanding of Nature is required to grow this source of concentrated undetermined energy, and understanding Nature is the definition of a

philosopher. It is called a Stone because it is mineral in nature, specifically it comes in a crystalline form – or at least this is its housing. The apostrophe is rightly on the end of the 's' and not before because the Stone can be made by any true philosopher, and is not the property of any one of them.

4. As Above, So Below

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

- 44. Each level reflects the superior and inferior
- 45. The Stone can be compared to natural things
- 58. Alchemy is analogous to generation in plants, animals & minerals

‘As above, so below’ is one of the more widely recognized alchemical adages, although not well understood by the public, and it is a fundamental aspect of philosophy.

Simply put: everything in the universe comes in quantized levels and each of these levels is governed by exactly the same set of rules, but its manifestation is slightly different.

By ‘quantized levels’ I mean that there exist levels of specific size, e.g. plants and animals are on the same level, and the Earth is one level above us. Relatively speaking, plants and animals are more-or-less the same size and exist together; the Earth is on a different level and is a different size. All of these are complete systems, i.e. we are one thing, a plant is one thing, the Earth is one thing, but a mountain is not one thing – it is part of the Earth. These are quantized levels because the laws of the universe have apparently made sure (which you should be able to verify for yourself if you have eyes) that there is no stable existence in-between an animal and a planet, i.e. there is nothing half way between the two. These fixed-size limits are called quanta.

I call the shift from animal to planet one vertical level up. One vertical level down would be cells, and down again would be molecules. One vertical level above a planet would be a solar system, and then a galaxy. Plants and animals are on the same vertical level, i.e. we are the same size, relatively speaking.

If you take any ‘thing’ in the universe, whether it be a physical object, emotion, concept, or anything else, this will have somehow come into existence following certain principles. ‘As above, so below’ makes two points relevant to this: (1) there are higher and lower vertical

manifestations of the same nature of the taken 'thing', (2) all of these other 'things' of the same nature (both above and below) operate philosophically in the same manner.

To elaborate: if we take a human as an example, vertically above we have: the Earth, the solar system, the galaxy, the universe; vertically below we have: cells, molecules, energy. Horizontally we also have all other animals, plants and minerals. Obviously it follows that by continually moving vertically and horizontally, this is going to include all naturally occurring systems (and by extension, everything else too), and so *everything* follows the same principles – which is in fact the subtle message that 'as above, so below' is meant to teach.

The usefulness of this principle is because it allows us to make direct comparisons between what we know and understand on our own level to all other levels. If something is true on our level, then the same thing is true on other all other levels too.

This is not to say that a galaxy needs to eat, drink and breathe, because those are the manifestation of nourishment requirements on the level in which we exist as humans. What it does say is that a galaxy indeed needs nourishment, just as everything does, but it will be in a form suitable to its own level, and the true nourishment sought by both is fundamentally the same: energy. Humans are born and die; therefore planets are born and die. Humans require nourishment to stay alive; therefore planets require nourishment to stay alive, in some form. Ideas too are born and die, can be young and old, and need nourishment to stay alive. It's universal.

'As above, so below' is crucial to understanding alchemy because it allows one to make deductions about one thing, e.g. the generation of the Stone, by observing another thing, e.g. the operations of the Earth, the generation of a chicken, or the sprouting of a seed. This is precisely the reason why the alchemists tell us to look to Nature, or in the Book of Nature (meaning the world around us) in order to understand alchemy and the development of the Stone.

'As above, so below', being a fundamental principle, is without limitation and applies in every situation and on every level. As such its usage for us does not end here, with comparing naturally occurring systems in the physical world, but can be extended to compare the entire nature of the

physical reality to that of the spiritual reality and beyond. From this we see that alchemy does indeed teach us spiritual truths, and gives us a glimpse into the spiritual world, of which the physical is only another manifestation, or reflection. It also works the other way, and tells us that any spiritual principle must also have a physical counterpart; and so it is inevitable that if such a spiritual concept such as the holy spirit or enlightenment truly exists then somewhere in this physical reality is hidden a physical counterpart of the same nature – for people who believe that, this can only be the Stone. Likewise if concentrated energy exists as a physical manifestation then there must exist a spiritual manifestation of the same.

From this understanding you can also see that the Stone was not a chance discovery, but that a wise philosopher could quite genuinely figure out both the inevitable necessity for the Stone's existence, and also the method of producing it, simply from observing the world around them and the actions of Nature.

5. One

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

- 48. Everything is made from one thing: quintessence
- 94. Only one thing is the matter of the Stone
- 95. The work begins with separation
- 96. Two things are made from one thing

There is one thing from which everything else originates. Some call it *God*, but I especially appreciate the descriptions of *Tao* from Taoism as they provide the most understandable description of this one thing, which by its nature is indescribable, that I have thus far read.

Something formless, complete in itself; there before Heaven and Earth; tranquil, vast, standing alone, unchanging. It provides for all things yet cannot be exhausted; it is the mother of the universe. I do not know its name, so I call it "Tao". Forced to name it further, I call it "the greatness of all thing", "the end of all endings"; I call it "that which is beyond the beyond", "that to which all things return". From Tao comes all greatness - it makes Heaven great, it makes Earth great, it makes man great.

Tzu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching*. Trans. Jonathan Star. 2008. Tarcher. Print

We already know that matter is energy. Just as matter is a manifestation of energy, energy is a manifestation of Tao. Tao is complete and it is everywhere, it is the 'thing' from which everything, not only matter and energy, but also thought and existence itself is formed.

There is no word for this One thing because it encompasses at the same time everything and nothing. It is where everything starts and where everything ends up.

However, with only One thing, there is nothing, and this is what I like to call 'God's Dilemma.' If there is only one single thing everywhere then this is exactly the same as there being one single thing nowhere, because from any relative standpoint (i.e. any perspective from inside the system) a universe full of any one thing would look identical to a universe full of any

other one thing, or full of nothing. There universe therefore does not exist while there is only one thing in it, because one thing is imperceivable since there is no perspective. In fact, the definition of 'nothing' could rightly be said to be not the absence of any object, but the absence of any difference.

Existence only comes into play when there are two different things able to interact. Tao becomes these two things by splitting itself into two: Yin and Yang. Creation by limitation; it splits itself into two halves which are no longer complete. The two aspects of the One, the Yin and the Yang, continually seek for their other half in order to dissolve back into Oneness, which is the only completely stable state (side note: it is a fact that all things are trying to obtain stability.) This struggle to come home creates everything we know, and the effect and truth of this penetrates all existence, to the extent that even our own romantic relationships are expressions of this same desire: two halves seeking to come back together. In fact, the entire existence of the universe is created from what is rightly considered a romantic relationship between Yin and Yang, which ties back into beauty being a sign of truth, and also why some religions present God as synonymous with love. This is why God is Love: it is not that God is full of love, or God gives love, or even that God is made of love; but that the feeling of love *is* the feeling of God. I'm talking of course of real love here, not a concoction of hormones.

Hold your male side with your female side; hold your bright side with your dull side; hold your high side with your low side. Then you will be able to hold the whole world.

When the opposing forces unite within there comes a power abundant in its giving and unerring in its effect. Flowing through everything, it returns to the First Breath. Guiding everything, it returns one to No Limits. Embracing everything, it returns one to the Uncarved Block.

When the Block is divided it becomes something useful and leaders rule with a few pieces of it. But the Sage holds the Block complete. Holding all things within himself, he preserves the Great Unity, which cannot be ruled or divided.

Tzu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching*. Trans. Jonathan Star. 2008. Tarcher. Print

It is enlightening, philosophically, alchemically, and in all areas of life, to understand that absolutely everything comes from the indescribable One, and will eventually, inevitably, and willingly dissolve back into the One. As above, so below: we can apply this principle to all situations and on all levels: matter is made from energy, and will one day decay back into

energy; a wooden chair is made from a tree, and will one day rot back into the Earth, become the soil, and become a tree again. Everything will eventually return from whence it came, and the root of all of this is a single field of somethingness, nothingness, consciousness, unconsciousness; neither matter nor energy; neither light nor dark; something which may be known but cannot be communicated, because that would be to attempt to explain it by using only a small portion of its infinite self.

Tao is eternal, one without a second; simple indeed, yet so subtle that no one can master it. If princes and kings could just hold it, all things would flock to their kingdom, Heaven and Earth would rejoice, with the dripping of sweet dew. Everyone would live in harmony, not by official decree, but by their own inner goodness.

This world is nothing but the glory of Tao, expressed through different names and forms. One who sees the things of this world as being real and self-existent, have lost sight of the truth; to him, every word becomes a trap, every thing becomes a prison.

One who knows the truth that underlies all things, lives in this world without danger. To him, every word reflects the universe, every moment brings enlightenment.

Rivers and streams are born of the ocean; all creation is born of Tao; just as water flows back to become the ocean, all creation flows back to become Tao.

Tzu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching*. Trans. Jonathan Star. 2008. Tarcher. Print

Does this principle of One have a practical significance in alchemy? Yes, it does, very much so! A true philosophical principle is not only philosophical, but also theoretical; and not only theoretical, but also practical. From the One come the Two (Yin-Yang), and from the Two come the many.

Just as the One is where existence itself begins, any true philosopher should recognize that the creation of the Philosophers' Stone must also begin with one thing.

6. Yin-Yang

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

- 42. It follows the principle of yin-yang
- 43. Generation requires opposites (binary, yin-yang)
- 97. There are two things
- 99. The Stone is made of volatile and fixed
- 102. The two things can be called male and female
- 103. The body is female, the water is male

As we learned in the previous chapter, everything comes from One thing, but with only One thing there is nothing. So for there to be any existence this One thing must split into two. Yet since these two things comes from one, it makes sense that they must cancel each other out, which means they must exist as opposites. For example, if we begin with the number 0 we can do nothing with that, 0 is not productive and it will not react with anything. But we can split that 0 into +1 and -1, then this +1 and this -1 can go off in different directions and interact with the universe. That 0 is now perceivable and active. This is how something can be created from nothing: nothingness can be split into a positive and a negative force.

Yin is feminine; Yang is masculine. Our universe is a universe of polarity; a binary universe in which everything is formed by the interplay of these two fundamental forces, the manifestation of which is present on every level.

Again, this is not supposed to be esoteric. We have all heard of Yin & Yang, but the truth of it is much simpler than the explanations usually given. Firstly, *male* and *female* is Yin & Yang: the fact that virtually all animals, and many plants, come in two forms (male and female) very obviously proves that we live in a binary universe. There is just something about twos. It is not a vague philosophy that people can agree or disagree with, or have personal opinions about; it is one of the most obvious facts that even someone blind and deaf could figure out: everything comes in twos. There is no denying it. 'Yin-Yang' is simply taking this obvious fact to up a

few levels, and following 'As above, so below', applying it in other circumstances.

All beings support yin and embrace yang, and the interplay of these two forces fills the universe.

Tzu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching*. Trans. Jonathan Star. 2008. Tarcher. Print

Yin is support and decomposition, the matrix. Yin wants to hold things together and return them to their original nature. Too much Yin destroys all by reducing everything into its fundamental components, in this way Yin is like water.

Yang is growth and development, the pattern. Yang wants to create new things and expand itself in all directions. Too much Yang destroys all by violently overpowering and consuming its surroundings, in this way Yang is like fire.

Neither can exist alone, or there will be nothing. Without Yin, Yang has no base from which to move and grow, and nothing to keep it tame and in check. It will destroy everything. Without Yang, Yin has no direction or pattern to follow, and nothing for it to nourish and support. It will do nothing.

The above analogies are just that: analogies. They are true to the extent that such comparisons can be, but they can never be explained wholly in words.

However, nothing is wholly Yin or wholly Yang, at least not anything that we can witness from our perspective here on Earth. All forms are a combination, or codependence, of Yin and Yang, with one of them dominating. The two forces work together in this manner. On any given level there exists a Yin (female) dominant manifestation and a Yang (male) dominant manifestation. For example, animals exist as male and female, with the two working together to maintain stability. On the next level animals (Yang) and plants (Yin) have exactly the same relationship. A human woman is therefore Yang dominant from being part of the animal kingdom, but Yin dominant by gender. So you can see how, like the entire weather system being generated from a simple input of energy, the relatively simple principle of Yin-Yang has generated extremely complex systems of its own, in this case life forms.

Consider how plants and animals are interdependent upon one another: animals breathe oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, while plants consume carbon dioxide and excrete oxygen. This is not a coincidence, and neither is it a coincidence that there are two parties to this mutual understanding. The sea has a dominating masculine force (because of salt), which makes it a competitive and violent environment. It's also why there are very few plants in the sea, even the coral are animals. The air has dominating feminine force, therefore lots of plants and comparatively few animals in between. Plants are indeed feminine, they support all the animals and are themselves passive and undominating; whereas animals can't help but run around attempting to conquer territory and multiply themselves as much as possible. Trees don't fight, but neither do they move nor build. Together we are stable, for a time.

Together: Yang forms, Yin supports, Yang develops, Yin defines, in an endless cycle. In this way, the two forces continuously create an infinite number of new manifestations. Each form will eventually result in an unstable overpowerment of either Yin or Yang, which will cause destruction (as we know, all things eventually decompose, even the elements.) But the form lasts for a time, searching endlessly for the perfect level of stability, and it moves to and fro, to and fro, between the dominance of Yin and Yang, for nothing can stand still in this universe, the two feeding off each other (thus the word 'interplay' in the first quote.) This swinging movement between the two extremes brings the object closer to its desire; decomposition and growth, evaporation and condensation, solution and coagulation. By moving between Yin dominance and Yang dominance the substance evolves to higher and higher degrees of stability, or '*perfection*' as alchemists would say.

As we can see in Nature, it takes both Yin and Yang for a successful and stable environment. The perfect combination is not 50/50, but a slight dominance of one force over the other, along with an opposite gender manifestation, allowing interplay and development between the two, and with the dominant force swinging back and forward on each level. It would not be stable to have a life form somewhere in-between a plant and an animal, instead we have plants and animals; plants with dominant Yin, animals with dominant Yang, and the two entirely reliant on each other for the survival and stability of both forms. They live together and love each other. Equally, within the level of the animal: a hermaphrodite would not make for a stable animal; but two distinct genders, each with their

own strengths and roles, perfectly complement one another. This is also why a very manly man needs a very girly woman; likewise, a feminine man needs a masculine woman – hence saying ‘opposites attract.’ Magnets illustrate that quite well.

As we get closer to discussion on the actions and effect of Yin-Yang in the perceivable world around us, this philosophical principle moves directly into alchemical theory, it being the direct cause of the Cycles of Nature. These two principles are the same principle in actuality, but it is useful for our understanding to split them into two so they can be discussed in different contexts, and then once they are sufficiently understood, they can be recombined inside our heads into one complete understanding.

7. Cycles of Nature

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

- 80. Only coction is required for the Stone's development
- 98. The two things are a liquid and a solid
- 106. The water must come from the body
- 110. Return the distilled water back to its body
- 119. The good salt is that which ascends
- 120. The salt is soluble
- 122. Some of the salt is distilled with the water

Everything in Nature is a cycle: the day is the cycle of the spin of the Earth; the month is (in theory) the cycle of the orbit of the moon; the year is the cycle of the orbit of the Earth around the Sun; the Great Year is the orbit of the Sun around the galaxy.

By now you no doubt understand that these are all manifestations of the same principles on different levels: as above, so below. You also will understand from the previous chapter that these cycles are caused by the 'to and fro' interplay of the masculine (Yang) and feminine (Yin) forces. To demonstrate this, let us look one step further down from the day, at a cycle closer to our own level and therefore more familiar to us: the water cycle.

As every schoolchild knows: the sun evaporates water into water vapor, the water vapour rises, condenses into clouds, rains back down as water again, and repeats. Let us consider this.

There are two processes at play here: evaporation & condensation. There is one medium: water, into two states: liquid & gas.

Firstly, let us consider that this cycle is caused by a constant battle between hot and cold (binary), fought through the medium of water (one thing), and represented by the current state of matter: liquid or gas (binary.) Granted, cold is only the absence of heat, but that is part of the nature of Yin-Yang, you can't have one existing without the other; if heat exists, so must cold; if light exists, so must dark; if Yin exists, so must Yang.

This battle is fought on the boundary of the evaporation point of water, which is the boundary between the Yin and the Yang in this context. The water cycles between being Yin dominant in the liquid state, and Yang dominant in the gas state – or vice versa, the alchemists never did come to an agreement about which was which. And all of this is caused by the simple input of energy into the system.

So that is where the cycle comes from, but what does it do exactly?

Each cycle performs three functions: a layering, a purification, and an empowerment.

Imagine you have a handful of wet soil, which you put into the bottom part of a glass jar. Above the jar is a strong lamp, which you repeatedly turn on for an hour, then off for an hour. Obviously, this is a simplified imitation, or microcosm, of what happens on the Earth. So what will you observe?

Before we continue I should address one point concerning the evaporation of a liquid. For simplicities sake many schools teach that when liquid is evaporated only pure liquid vapour will rise while particles dissolved or present in the liquid will remain behind. This is true only to a degree, solid particles most certainly do pass over along with the liquid, a fact which, although the bane of vodka distilleries the world throughout, is a fundamental component of the workings of Nature and so should not be so lightly simplified. If the schoolteacher's simplification were true then there would be no reason for triple-distilled vodka – clearly some solid particles (the most volatile) do ascend with the liquid.

As the water evaporates, rises, condenses, and rains, the soil will arrange into layers according to density; sand and little stones at the bottom, then the heavier of the soil, and at the top the lightest and most fine soil. We have gravity to thank for this: the hot air and water vapor will rise, and with it the most volatile (in this context meaning most soluble) particles, having become attached to, or lifted by, the ascending water vapor. The less dense and more easily dissolved the particle, the further the water will lift it while evaporating. In practice this causes the heavier particles to sink as the lighter particles are picked up and placed back down on top of them. Everything will therefore arrange itself in order of density. This you can already see by considering that the top layer of the Earth is a soft soil, and it gets grittier and grittier as you dig down – if you have ever tried to dig a hole you will be familiar with this. The same is also very easily

proven with by experiment, which is also the First Part of our work in making the Stone.

So that is layering, on each natural cycle the subjected matter is sorted and ordered according to its quality, i.e. solubility. Layering is Nature's way of separating the subtle from the gross.

The more volatile a substance, the more easily the substance is broken down and its energy extracted, as you learned earlier. The layering which occurs due to natural cycles allows for substances to effectively be ordered according to how easily they break down. A useful property, consider: plants grow in the top layer of the soil, which also happens to be where the most easily decomposable soil has been placed from which they collect the easily-accessible energy to form into matter for their own use. Animals then eat the plants to absorb their energy, and other animals eat those animals for the same reason. Once eaten our stomachs digest what we eat into even smaller particles, which is just another process of putrefaction. The purpose for which is to extract the energy from the substance, which can only be done by destroying its form.

The water cycle did this: it concentrated energy in the top layers of soil on the surface of the Earth, otherwise the energy in that location would have been used up long ago. So the water cycle replenishes and recharges the energy on the boundary between solid, liquid and gas, which is what the surface of the Earth is: a boundary between states of matter; and on this boundary is where life forms flourish. We take the surface for granted since it is mostly all we see, but most of the universe is not a boundary between states of matter. The boundary between states of matter is where the energy is and where the changes happen, and therefore where most life forms live. Humans live on three boundaries: between solid and gas yes, but also on the edges of oceans, lakes and rivers. I would be surprised if you could name one [non-modern] city in the entire world that is not on an ocean, a lake, or a river.

Each natural cycle also serves to both purify and empower the substance, which is discussed in the next chapter: Solve et Coagula.

8. Solve et Coagula

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

- 81. The moisture is repeatedly distilled and returned to the body
- 82. The circulation is to continuously imbibe the substance
- 83. Solid becomes liquid; liquid becomes solid
- 123. The water purifies the salt

‘Solve et Coagula’ is Latin for ‘dissolve and coagulate’, or in plain English: dissolve and solidify. It implies a phase change from one state of matter to another, and then back again. Following this principle, if our object is a solid substance, we make the solid change to a liquid, and then we change it back to a solid again – very simple.

The mindset of today would consider this entirely pointless, as one ends in the same place where one started. This shows the ignorance of the modern mindset. Phase change is absolutely fundamental to every part of alchemy, Nature and the universe.

Each state of matter represents Yin dominance or Yang dominance, as you learned in the Yin-Yang chapter. So while the form of the object remains the same, regardless of its phase state (water is still H₂O, whether as liquid, ice or vapour), by changing its state you are moving the object to and fro between the Yin and Yang (feminine and masculine) principles, on one level. This movement between different states of matter is what allows undetermined energy to condense into determined energy (matter to take shape out of energy), or determined energy to free into undetermined energy (matter to be freed back into energy), depending on the overall dominance of the system – overall Yang dominance causes development, overall Yin dominance causes decomposition.

This occurs because a substance must either be becoming something (developing), or else it must be unbecoming something (decomposing). If the substance is developing then the energy freed by bonds released in the solution phase will be imprinted with the form of the substance and coagulated into the assigned form upon coagulation, thus furthering the

development of the substance. If the substance is decomposing then this means the conditions are not correct for development to occur and so the undetermined energy in the substance is concentrated as more and more determined energy becomes decomposed into undetermined energy. This same action also serves to rid the substance of impurities; as any part of the substance which is not in agreement with substance's main form will have nothing to protect it from being broken down into undetermined energy and then reformed into whatever form the substance is attempting to become, which is then a purity instead of an impurity.

To put it another way: solid becomes liquid because there is more free energy inside the substance (e.g. it is heated), if energy is then removed from the substance (e.g. it is cooled) then the substance will become a solid once again. Every time a substance goes through this cycle it has the opportunity to increase its overall undetermined energy, and potentially develop its form further from this undetermined energy, or else to concentrate its energy if it has no instructions (seed) for what to become. The catalyst for this is the change of state.

The number of times the substance changes state is more important than the amount of time spent in any particular state. This is because it is movement and change that allow for development, obviously since: change=change; no-change=no-change. The more often it changes state, the more potential for change internally.

In the Earth's water cycle you can consider that the act of evaporation and condensation replenishes the energy in the water, and in turn the soil. The water is purified and empowered, which ensures that the Earth's water, which is its blood, is always energetic. Without the water cycle all of the energy would eventually be used up, and then nothing could grow – a problem that mass industrialized farming is having difficulties with at the moment, because in some areas they have extracted the energy from the soil faster than the Earth is replenishing it.

9. Generation from Corruption

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

145. It must putrefy

146. One cannot change one thing into another, except by putrefaction first

156. Generation follows corruption

An apple is an apple, a fig is a fig. If an apple wishes to become a fig it must die and be reborn.

In one sense, this is obvious. Everyone knows you can't change a developed apple into a fig, and everyone knows that if you allow an apple to decompose, then plant a fig seed in it, a fig tree will grow out of the matter which was previously an apple. Not only that, but a seed is very inclined to grow in rotten vegetation. This is known by all, but taken for granted – another great philosophical truth hidden in plain sight.

Both apples and figs contain seeds inside them, which will not grow while the fruit is fresh. Only when the fruit has died, decomposed, putrefied, will the seed begin to grow. No tree grows from an apple while the apple is in your fruit basket, only when the apple has decomposed into a formless mush.

An object cannot become something that it is not; death is required for further development, thus: generation from corruption. There is no evolution without death; there is no generation without corruption.

The mythological phoenix is an alchemical metaphor for this cycle, it repeatedly dies and is reborn from its own ashes.

As above, so below: the Christian concept of the resurrection, and the spiritual rebirth, are this exact principle applied to the spiritual. One cannot become a perfect being without having died and been reborn; this is how the soul evolves. Jesus understood this concept well:

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

The Bible, KJV, John 12:23-24

The same applies to our civilization, it can only develop so far, and then will inevitably become corrupt, eventually imploding, from which a new and pure civilization is reborn from its ashes. Then when this new civilization gets old it will happen again.

Again: one thing cannot become another, or exceed its original design specification, unless it dies and is reborn.

Physically, undetermined energy is required for growth because it can assume any form required of it. Determined energy is already formed into a stable substance and so is useless in its current form for further development, it is only useful for being what it already is, but cannot become something else, just as the apple cannot become the fig. For further development to occur it is necessary for the object to be reduced, which occurs through excess Yin or Yang, resulting in instability which destroys the form and turns the substance back into its original form of undetermined energy. This undetermined energy can then be impressed with a new form, by any seed, the form of which it will adopt, and form itself into determined energy according to such instructions.

Now that we have finished comparing our apple to a fig, let us now imagine that we eat it. What happens here is that our body puts the apple through various manual processes of decomposition, i.e. digestion by enzymes, in order to extract its energy. Just as a seed will not grow from a fresh apple, neither is a fresh apple of benefit to our bodies without having gone through a putrefaction process. The first stage is to chew the apple, which breaks its matter down into an apple slurry. The second stage is then to dissolve that slurry into even smaller components, achieved by enzymes and acid in our stomachs, so as to break the bonds and destroy the form. The freed energy can then be made into any particle of matter required by our own bodies, which is done automatically as the undetermined-energy immediately adopts our own seed form and becomes part of us. Though in practice we are unable to extract all the energy from the apple, which is why our bodies can also make use of larger building-blocks, such as sugars, proteins, vitamins, etc. as a compromise. But undetermined energy becomes anything, which is why

a low-calorie but healthy diet leaves one feeling much better and more energetic than a diet consisting of all the building-blocks we are wrongly taught that our body is looking for, but from processed food and supplements, which lack the undetermined energy which is what our body really wants.

Mammals have evolved to eat fresh food, this does not mean that decomposed food is bad, but rather we evolved to eat fresh food in order to avoid bacterial contamination. Other animals, such as many insects and reptiles, prefer already decomposed food as they do not have the internal body heat required to break the food down inside of them. This is why a rotten apple attracts flies and a fresh apple does not. A crocodile will kill its prey and then leave it to decompose before consuming it. The only reasons why humans can eat fresh food is because we decompose it by digestion once it is inside of us.

10. Seed

Alchemy Deciphered, which you should read before this book, shows that the alchemists agree on the following premises relevant to this chapter:

- 46. Seeds can only spring up after their kind
- 52. All things have seed
- 55. Metals have seed
- 56. Metals all share the same seed
- 57. Metals only develop inside the earth

All living things have seed. Firstly, recognize that I am not discussing seed in the sense of the physical seed from which a plant grows, but the instructions inside of this, the essence of the seed, i.e. the message that is carried in the DNA. To put it another way: all things that have a natural form must have instructions for how to be formed this way. The instructions are the seed.

All living things have seed. Furthermore, all things were once living, so that implies that all things have seed. Everything is alive, or was once alive and is the dead body of its former self. Even plastic is made from oil, which is the remains of what was once plant matter that has been kept under pressure for a very long time. Everything that we see was once part of a living system, and a living system originally formed it out of undetermined energy for a particular purpose.

I will restate this because it's a very important philosophical point: literally everything you can see was once part of something that was alive and grew from a seed. Wood, cotton, rubber, etc. are all from vegetation. Plastic was oil, which itself was once vegetation. Glass comes from sand, which is a mineral. Minerals grow underground. The latter is the only difficult one to get your head around.

As we discussed in a previous chapter, a seed can only become that which it intends to be. One can't grow an apple tree from a fig seed, but only a fig tree from a fig seed.

There are three major groups of life on our level: animals, plants & minerals (which includes metals.) Yes, minerals are alive, or they were

when they were living in their natural environment: inside the Earth. Inside of the Earth, minerals and metals will develop, grow and multiply; perhaps not in the traditional sense, but they do in their own way. Minerals have seed too, that is to say that they have instructions on what to be. The alchemists believed that metals all have the same seed, the seed of gold, and so all metals are the same species, but in different stages of their development, with gold as their fully developed stage, or adulthood. I will discuss metallic generation another time, for now let's focus on the seed principle.

The seed is an intangible, invisible essence which contains the instructions for what the potential object is and how to grow. Any undetermined energy which comes into contact with the seed is impressed with the seed's form, i.e. instructions, and it takes this form. If there is enough undetermined energy in the immediate environment, and if there are natural cycles suitable for growth and development according to this seed, then the form will grow according to these instructions. For plants, the natural environment is the earth and Earth's cycles are adequate; whereas animals need a more protected environment and assistance as the initial growth is more delicate and complex.

Philosophically the seed is a quality of the masculine (Yang) principle, while the feminine (Yin) principle supplies the body. Both a male and a female are required for generation; this fact is not limited only to the animal kingdom but applies everywhere and to everything. In some cases the form may contain both male and female, thus being able to reproduce asexually, but still in accordance with the seed principle.

In short, everything in the universe grows from seed, and it is either in the process of becoming something (growing), or else in the process of unbecoming something (decomposing). Metals outside of their natural environment are decomposing, which is why they rust and break down, whereas inside of the Earth they grow and develop. Metal is not dug out of the ground already rusted, it only rusts on contact with oxygen because oxygen is not its natural environment. Humans and animals also grow, according to the seed instructions in their DNA, until they reach their full potential, and then they begin to slowly die – that is, unless they can find something to supply the perfect conditions for endless development; some kind of concentrated undetermined energy.